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NATHANIEL ALLISON

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NO one member of the medical profession in this country has had more influence on the development of modern orthopedic institutions than Nathaniel Allison. As professor of orthopedic surgery in three of our leading medical schools at various intervals during the last 15 years, and as chief of the orthopedic services which these schools controlled, his influence was widespread and of the utmost importance in their development. Those who were fortunate enough to work under him experienced a stimulus rarely felt. Always alert to the newer developments in surgery of the bones and joints, and interested in investigative work, he made all who came in contact with him feel the urge to improve the whole field of orthopedic surgery. His own investigations were most valuable, but only with the realization of the volume of work produced by his associates, often at his suggestion and always with his fullest co-operation, can the scope of his influence be appreciated.

Dr. Allison's influence was not confined alone to investigative work in surgery of the bones and joints; he excelled also in organization. In the problems of hospital organization, of work by committees, whether of a medico-political trend or of the most scientific import, his ability was outstanding. Scientific meetings, large or small, were led by his quiet but firm influence. He was able to bring together a conglomeration of divergent viewpoints, and thus develop order out of chaos.

Dr. Allison was born in St. Louis. His father was the son of Dr. Nathaniel Allison of Mexico, Missouri, and his grandfather's influence led him to enter the practice of medicine. His early education was obtained in St. Louis. This was followed by a period of study in the United States Military Academy in West Point. He entered Harvard in 1894, and graduated in medicine there in 1901. After an internship at the Boston Children's Hospital and a period of service with Dr. Edward Bradford in Boston he returned to St. Louis in 1904, where he built up his reputation as an orthopedic surgeon of international repute. He was married to Marion Aldrich of Chicago in 1909.

Dr. Allison's earlier work in St. Louis led to the development of the orthopedic service at the Barnes Hospital and the teaching of that branch in the Medical School of Washington University. In 1915 he was with the American Ambu-

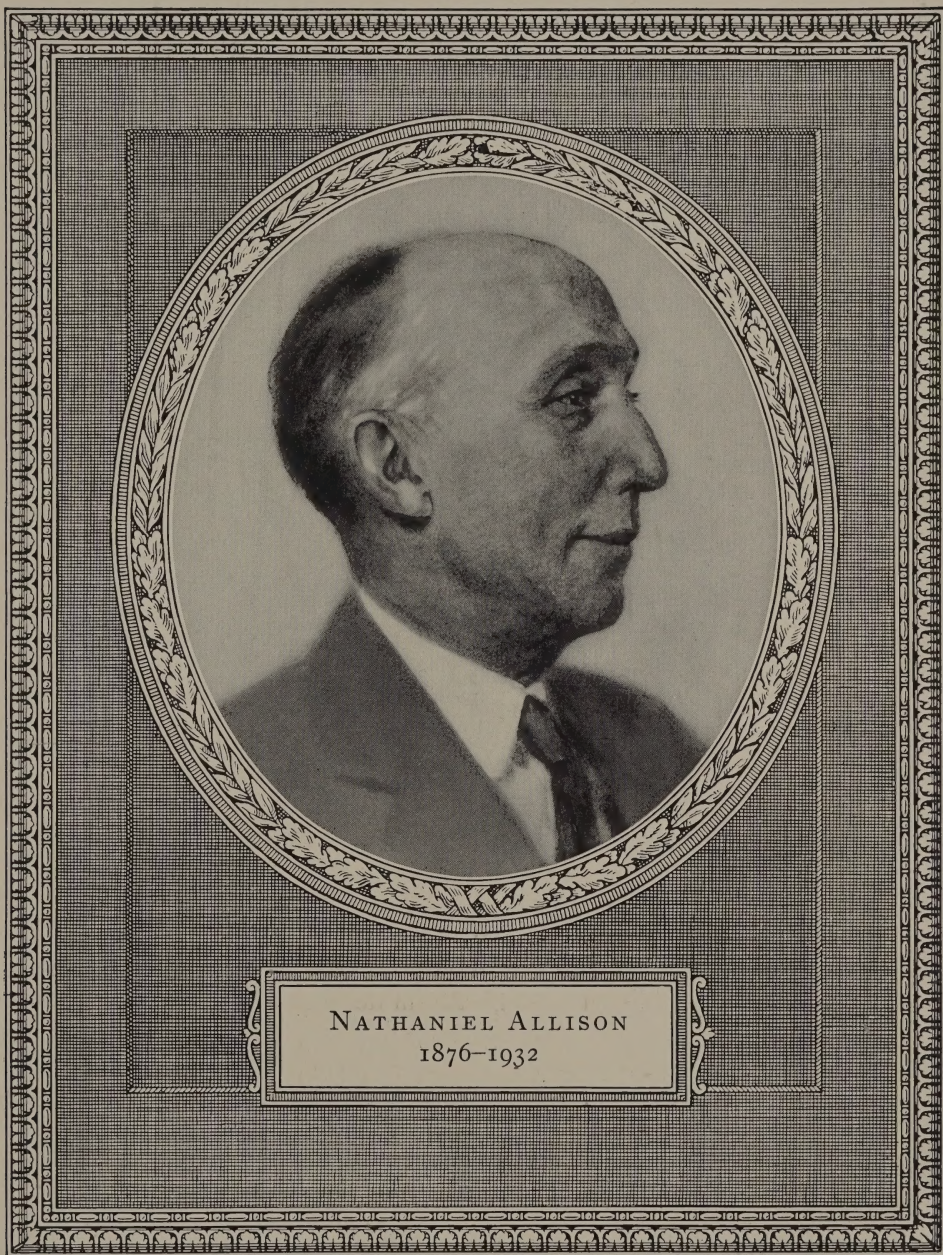
lance Corps at Neuilly, France, and later with the American Expeditionary Forces he served in Base Hospital 21 at Rouen. In the autumn of 1917, when special consultant services were organized, he was second in charge of the work of organizing the care of fractures, and the work in the advanced areas was under his supervision. This was a task requiring constant vigilance, tact, and wisdom, and the efficiency with which it was carried out testifies to his skill and understanding. Returning from France he served for a time in Walter Reed Hospital as assistant director of the surgical service. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and was finally discharged from the service as colonel, which rank he held in the Medical Reserve Corps until his death.

After Dr. Allison's discharge from the army he was sent to Rome as representative of the Medical Department at the Inter-Allied Congress of Surgery. Having accomplished this mission he returned to St. Louis and resumed his practice, and a professorship at Washington University, officiating as Dean of the Medical School. In 1923 he returned to Boston as chief of the orthopedic department of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and on the death of Dr. Robert W. Lovett he was made professor of orthopedic surgery in the Harvard Medical School. He also served as chief of the staff of the New England Peabody Home for Crippled Children, and in many other ways made his influence felt in the medical community of Boston.

In 1929, with the reorganization of the Medical Department of the University of Chicago and the Billings Memorial and Allied Hospitals, a chief of the Orthopedic Service was sought and Allison was asked to serve in this capacity, and again the result was one of the best organized and equipped orthopedic services in the country. While there, in 1930 he was stricken, and although he recovered and resumed his post for a period of many months in 1931, he never completely resumed his former activity.

His influence was wide, and many organizations not mentioned owed to him a great deal for his share in their development. His pleasing personality, and his ability to meet people of widely divergent viewpoints and bring them together when necessary, must be regarded as one of his outstanding characteristics. Those who worked with him always felt that he was governed only by a desire to see progress in orthopedic diagnosis and practice. Never without a plan to improve conditions when necessary, he was greatly in demand when all sorts of difficult tasks had to be performed. Although to many his work may not have seemed difficult, yet there must have been numerous times when the multiplicity of these tasks wore harder on him than was realized, thus helping to bring to an untimely end one of the most useful careers in modern orthopedic surgery.





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